

REPORT NO.

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**SOURCE**

1. On 15 September 1953, source learned [redacted] 2  
that Ulbricht had been considered since 17 June as a man of no consequence. Ulbricht was given to understand this situation when he reported on the causes of the 17 June riots in Moscow. Source's informant voiced the opinion that the Soviets would retain Ulbricht for another six months so as not to compromise themselves in the eyes of the "reactionary" population. But in the spring of 1954 at the latest, he would be pushed into the background, released from his government office and be restricted to party functions after the Hungarian pattern. It was not ruled out in well informed circles that Ulbricht might end by suicide or die of some illness or from the consequences of a traffic accident. He was devoid of any influence already now. The Soviets induced him to perform an act of self criticism in his concluding speech at the 15th Conference of the SED Central Committee, in which he admitted that he was principally to blame for the mistakes made and the tendency toward replacing collective leadership by his direct authority. After his first conferences with the Soviets, Ulbricht had been rather timid, had not displayed his former ruthlessness and often appeared pale as death at his office in the Haus der Einheit. It was only in the course of the recent weeks that Ulbricht tried to reestablish his previous prestige and standing at the SED Central Committee by threats and references to the fate of Zaisser and Herrnhadt.

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2. Source illustrated Ulbricht's position by referring to an exchange of views which took place in Ulbricht's bureau in early September, in the presence of Rudi Eylel, who is attached to the Cadre-West Department of the SED Central Committee, and Anton Plenikowski, chief of the Department of State Administration. At this meeting, the situation of the East German farmers was discussed. Eylel was to report on Western statistics on the number of farmers who had fled to the West prior to late 1952. The problem involved the situation of some thousand farmsteads which had been abandoned. In the course of the subsequent discussion Ulbricht was reminded of the fact that it was not the Russians who had pressed for the collectivization of East German farmers as early as 1952. Ulbricht was told that it was due to his influence that this detrimental measure was taken and that in taking this line he had not refrained from falsifying facts. For instance he had pointed out that farmers themselves were, allegedly, convinced that small farms were uneconomical. Ulbricht

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was blamed for having misled the Russians to believe that the East German farmers wanted collective farming. He was reproached with having done this because he wanted to be considered as the builder of socialism in East Germany. Those present in Ulbricht's office demanded energetic measures to eliminate the grievances of the farmers. When such measures were discussed Ulbricht repeatedly interrupted the speakers and tried to make the conferees responsible for the mistakes which had been made. He also pointed out that all those present had previously agreed with the measures suggested by him. When he attacked Fleyel and reproached him with his poor tactics against Western propaganda and policy, Fleyel rose and said that he was going to leave the room because these reproaches were unjustified. When he was going to the door, Ulbricht stepped in his way saying that he would not stand such behaviour. Thereupon Fleyel pushed him aside and said: "It was nobody but you who landed us in this plight, and it was your damned ambition. It is your guilt that the 150,000 farmers ran away." Ulbricht became angry, sounded the bell for his personal Referent to come, and threatened Fleyel that he would liquidate him because he was fed up with this situation. Plenikowski asked Ulbricht's personal Referent to leave the room and told Ulbricht in a very quiet voice: "Listen, if you want to liquidate this man (pointing to Fleyel), we will not put up with this and we will see to it that your career comes to an end. You are perfectly aware of this situation. Be steady, all of you, and if Fleyel wants to go that is his affair." Thereupon Fleyel left the room.

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